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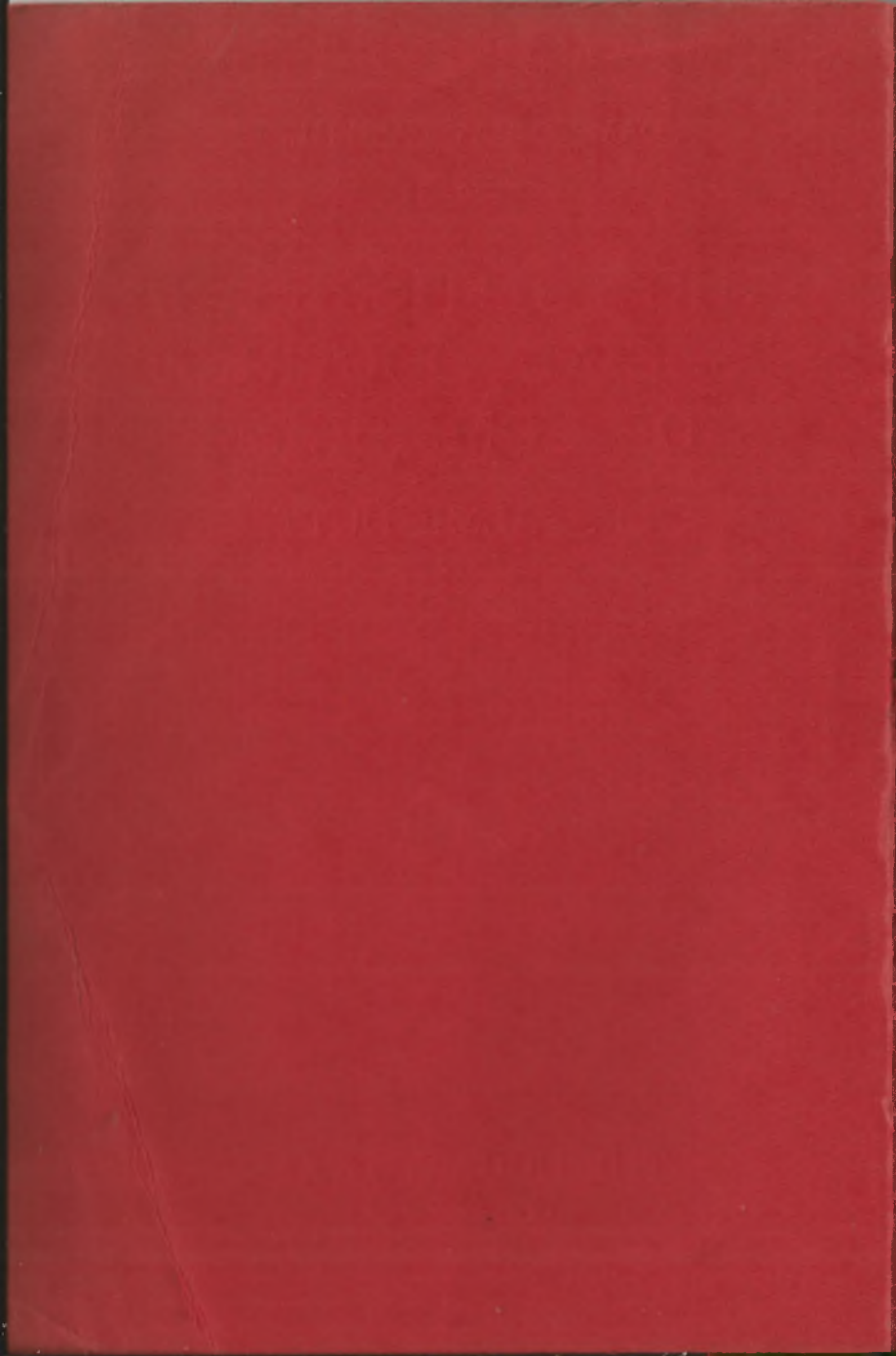
THE POLITICAL AND SOCIAL DOCTRINE OF COMMUNISM

R. PALME DUTT



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OF COMMUNISM

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R. PALME DUTT



SECOND IMPRESSION

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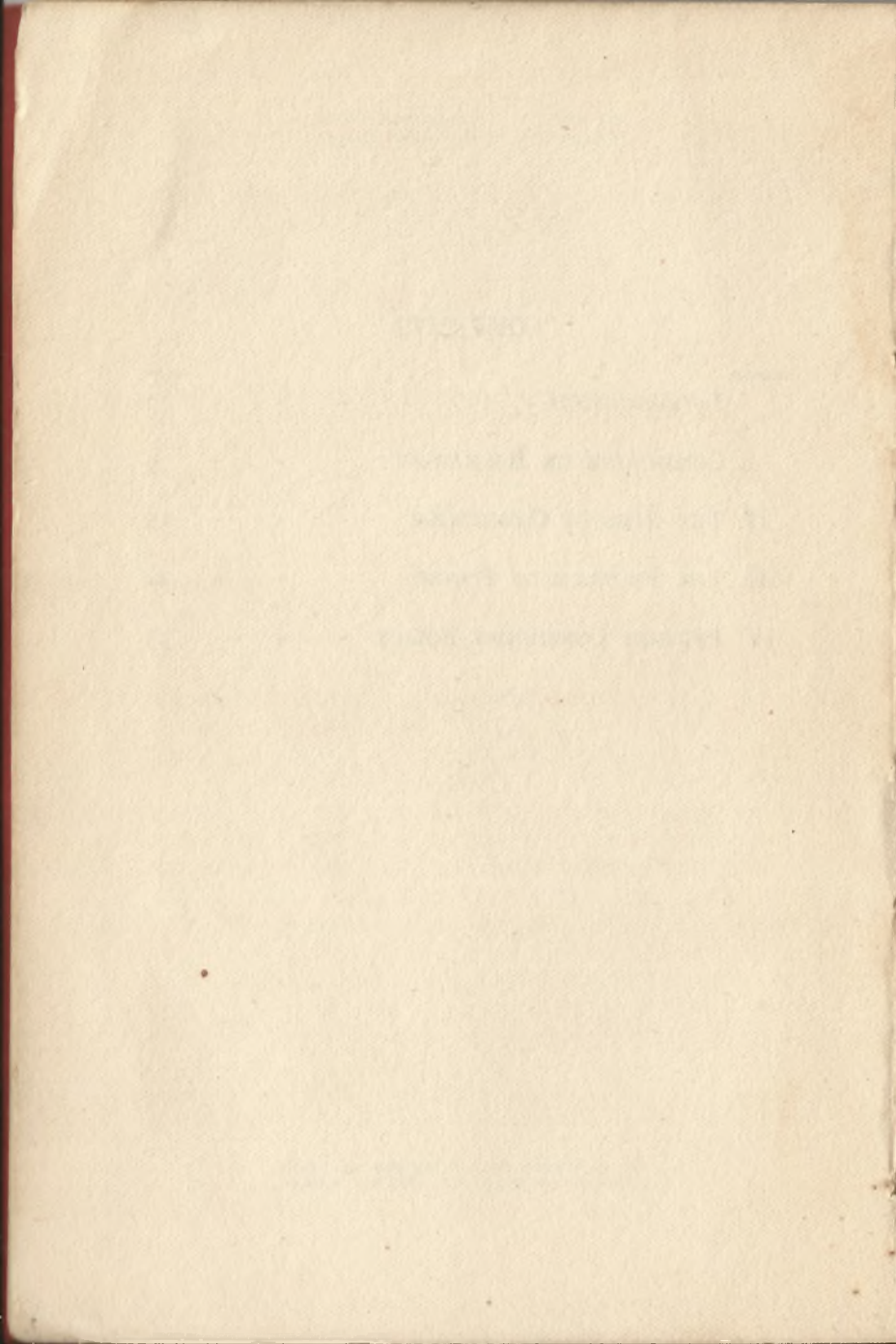
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INTRODUCTION

COMMUNISM is universally recognized to-day as one of the main currents of the modern world. Yet, despite familiarity, it still arouses extremely passionate feelings, whether in support or opposition. The representatives of reaction to-day, especially Fascism, apply the label "Communism," "Marxism," or "Bolshevism" to denounce, not only all schools of Socialism, but all liberal and democratic doctrine or practice. From the Pope to Hitler, from Mr. Neville Chamberlain to Sir Walter Citrine, all proclaim Communism the supreme enemy.

Simultaneously with this campaign of denunciation, support of Communism visibly grows throughout the world. A century ago the international Communist League numbered only a few handfuls. Two-thirds of a century ago, when the working class first won power in a capital city of Western Europe for six weeks in the Paris Commune, its crushing was loudly proclaimed as the end of Communism. Two decades ago, when the modern Communist International was founded, the working class under Communist leadership had won power in one country, and Communist groupings of varying strength existed in the labour movements of the world. To-day Communism has built up the new socialist order in the largest State in the world, and powerful Communist parties, hundreds of thousands strong, are advancing in a series of leading countries, while in other countries the most intense persecution in history is failing to check its growth. The advance

to world communism as the next stage of human society is foreseen by many observers.

There are objective reasons for this advance. We are living in a period of growing world crisis and conflict, in which the future of human society is at stake. It is widely recognized that basic solutions are necessary. Communism can claim with justification to have alone predicted the problems of the present world situation. Communism further claims to be able to show the way out for the saving of human culture and for its enormous advance.

Thinking men and women of all countries are increasingly turning to Communism as the key to modern problems. Communism is admittedly hostile to the interests of the handful of those who are making gigantic fortunes out of the existing social and economic disorganization and misery of the world. But Communism represents the common interests of all working people, of all producers, of all professionals and intellectuals who are passionately desiring to help to create a better world of abundance, of peace and brotherhood, of deepened culture and of co-operative advance.

THE POLITICAL AND SOCIAL DOCTRINE OF COMMUNISM

I—COMMUNISM OR BARBARISM

THERE is no need to emphasize the urgency of the issues which confront the world to-day.

The material powers in man's hands have outstripped the existing forms of social and political organisation. We are living in a period of extreme decay of the old capitalist order, while the new socialist order has already come into being in the largest State in the world. This situation creates completely new and urgent problems for all who are living at the present day.

The traditional forms of class ownership of the means of production, expressed in capitalism, which once performed a useful and necessary function to develop production and technique, have now become enemies of productive development ; and their decaying remains are landing mankind in a morass. In consequence, in every field, economic, social and political, the world to-day presents a spectacle of anarchy and menace which is felt by every thinking person.

It is universally known that modern productive powers could very rapidly produce abundance for all persons now living, and for many more than the present world population ; could lighten the labours of all who are now overworked and enable them to live with all their powers in a world in which they are at present disinherited slaves ; and could give a productive and full life to all who are at present unemployed or without the means of existence.

But society is not at present master of its means of production, in order to carry out this organisation for

the general benefit, the plans for which already exist in the heads of scientists, engineers and technicians. The ownership of the decisive means of production is concentrated in the hands of a few narrowing groups of monopolist capitalists, who control economy in all parts of the world except the Soviet Union. These are unable to organize production except for profit. Since the conditions of monopoly, with the accompanying poverty of the propertyless masses, constantly limit the possibilities of expanding production on a profitable basis, or even utilizing the existing powers, the modern leaders of economy and statesmen are compelled increasingly to devote their organizing abilities to devising plans for restricting production and destroying wealth.

There is hardly an important commodity to-day, whether raw material, foodstuffs or manufactured goods (milk, bread, meat, tea, rubber, tin, copper, coal, steel), for which the monopolist capitalists are not operating the most elaborate schemes to restrict their production. The only industry which is encouraged to expand freely is the war industry or production of the means of destruction.

So far from endeavouring to organize world production and the interchange of goods and services, the monopolist capitalists work to hedge round their monopolies with high walls of restriction, and to make the economic-political areas under their control "autarchic" or self-sufficing areas, with consequent lowering of the standard of living.

This economic war of the monopolist combines is carried forward into political and armed warfare. Since there are no more free areas of the world untouched by monopoly (outside the Soviet Union, which they long to conquer if they could, and therefore greedily prepare to attack), the monopolists, driven by the ceaseless need of capitalism to expand, can only

endeavour to expand at one another's expense. Therefore they are compelled to devote all their energies to fight to divide the world anew. This was the character of the world war of 1914, which exceeded all previously known wars in horror and destruction, and only served to sow the seeds for the next. Already within twenty years they are preparing the next world war, and the scale of the arming far exceeds that before 1914.

Everybody knows and repeats that the new world war which is now closely threatening would mean universal massacre, barbarity and destruction. Yet humanity is sliding down the slope to it at a daily increasing pace, as if it were some inevitable doom.

The rising revolt of the masses of the people against these intolerable conditions, expressed in the growth of the working-class movement and the demand for socialism, compels the monopolist rulers to resort to all kinds of desperate expedients to maintain their power. The former current of nineteenth-century classic capitalism to liberalism and democracy as its typical forms is replaced by the current of the twentieth-century financial oligarchy to extreme reaction. Formerly, in the majority of capitalist countries the working-class movement and socialism were in varying degree tolerated except in regimes that were regarded as notoriously barbarous and backward, such as Tsarist Russia or the colonial countries. To-day in some of the most advanced and highly developed capitalist countries the attempt is made to exterminate completely the working-class movement and socialist propaganda. This means inevitably, not only war on socialism, communism or trade unionism, but on all democratic forms or liberal expression, and the establishment of an open violent dictatorship. It means war on all culture, which helps people to think, and the deliberate inculcation of poisonous, irrational, bloodthirsty nonsense, racial intolerance and militarist demon-worship.

This systematic organization of a terrorized, overworked and mentally starved slave society, directed to the supreme aim of war, is the most modern development of monopoly capitalism under conditions of extreme crisis. It is known as fascism—a name invented by a socialist renegade and condottiere type who was the first to understand the new stage of capitalist politics and the opportunities it opened for unscrupulous mercenaries and adventurers in the service of capitalism. Fascism has already conquered in two major capitalist countries, threatens the remainder, and is imitated and admired by all reactionaries. Wherever fascism has conquered, it proceeds to wars of conquest against other countries, and is the main driving force of the new world war.

All these phenomena are typical phenomena of a dying and doomed social order. They are no surprise to Marxism which predicted this outcome if capitalism were not overthrown. But they are unspeakably shocking and painful to all those who were brought up in the old liberal, cultured, civilized traditions, without understanding the barbarous, brutal underside of this liberal capitalism, and without being steeled by Marxism for the realities of the epoch in which they were destined to live.

This present world situation makes extremely urgent the fight of the rising collective humanity of the future, represented to-day by the organized working-class movement and its conscious expression, Communism, to conquer rapidly in order to end this decay and destruction before it shall have done further irreparable damage, to establish world order, organize social production and save and carry forward human culture. This is the simplest meaning of Communism and its task to-day.

Formerly, in the nineteenth century, it was still possible for defenders of the existing social order to

argue that, despite defects, it "worked," it was "progressive," that is, it was carrying forward production and technique more rapidly than ever before, it was extending benefits to wide numbers, it was extending democratic rights, and uniting the world in an economic network. This situation is now reversed. Modern monopoly capitalism is blocking productive development, preventing the use of existing powers, condemning mankind to needless shortage and hardship, replacing democratic gains by reaction, breaking down the nascent sentiments of international brotherhood, and preparing universal massacre and destruction. Hence the urgency to replace it.

The war in 1914 was already the most powerful demonstration that capitalism had exhausted its role and that it was time to replace it by socialism. But the subjective factor, represented by the organized working-class movement, was not yet ready or strong enough for the necessary task. Only in one major country, Russia, the working masses followed the Communist policy and replaced the rule of the capitalists by their own rule. Despite the ravages of civil war and armed intervention from the capitalist world to break their power, under the leadership of the Communist Party they were able to maintain their power, and proceeded to build up socialism. Here, in consequence, a remarkable material and cultural advance, never before equalled, has accompanied the decline and chaos of the capitalist world.

In the rest of the world, however, the peoples, although bleeding and horror-struck from the war and yearning after a new social order, still clung to the old capitalist forms, feared civil war, and sought to rebuild the capitalist economic order in order to pass through it by peaceful democratic evolution to socialism. This was the outlook of Social Democracy which dominated the working-class movement after the war. Social

Democracy had originally built up the working-class movement on the programme of Marxism, but in the period of imperialism the majority of its leadership had adapted itself to the imperialist ruling class, and this process was completed in the war. The Communist Parties grew up from the midst of Social Democracy during the war and after, on the basis of those sections that stood by the principles of Marxism, and chose the original name "Communist" (the term always used by Marx and Engels, and preferred by them to "Social Democrat") to mark themselves off from the corrupted Social Democracy. But they had still to win the support of the majority of the working class and the political leadership of the peoples against capitalism.

Since in five-sixths of the world humanity was not yet ready after the war for the decisive struggle against capitalism, the cycle of capitalism in decay had to be repeated on a yet more extensive and horrible scale in the laboratory of history in order to prepare men for their task. This has been the history of the post-war period. The capitalist restoration and stabilization after the war only ended in the most devastating world economic crisis ever known, and the intensified social conflicts and imperialist antagonisms developing from this have given rise to the new wave of reaction and fascism, economic war, increasing armed wars and the preparation of a new world war. At the same time this process has led to widespread awakening of the peoples, dealt heavy blows to the old illusions of Social Democracy, made possible the growing unity of the working class advancing to Communism, and won over millions of small propertied, peasant, professional and intellectual elements to unite with the working class in the common struggle against fascism and war. Thus on the eve of the threatened new world war humanity is far nearer readiness than in 1914.

The choice before the world to-day has in this

way reached an extreme degree of sharpness and clearness.

A century ago the poet Heine, who supported communism, expressed the fear that communism, although necessary on grounds of social justice, might endanger the heritage of human culture which he believed bound up with the tradition of an owning and leisured class. To-day the reverse is the case. It is the propertied class which is threatening all culture with destruction, as can be most clearly seen in the ravages of a Franco or a Hitler amid the plaudits of their wealthy backers. It is communism, based on the working masses, which can alone save and carry forward human culture.

The choice is between communism and barbarism.

II—THE AIMS OF COMMUNISM

WHAT is the aim of Communism ?

Communism does not seek to impose some arbitrarily imagined social ideal upon society. The aims of communism grow out of existing society.

The existing productive forces can no longer be organized upon the basis of private property. They already require, for their full utilization, social organization on a single plan. Given such social organization, the technical possibilities already exist for supplying on an adequate basis, and, after an extremely rapid development, in abundance, all human needs. Such social organization, however, requires the elimination of the barriers of private property in the means of production, and the organization of production for use.

The aim of Communism is, therefore, to organize the productive powers of society—ultimately of world society as a unitary integrated whole—for the supply of human needs, utilizing to the best advantage the

existing natural resources, scientific possibilities, and co-operative labour of all human beings able to work, and by this means to liberate humanity from the present dependence on imperfectly mastered natural and economic forces, with the consequent antagonisms and class divisions. In this way will be realized the free communist society of the future.

Modern Communism needs to be clearly distinguished from previous types of communistic conceptions which found expression in past ages.

In the past, ideas and aspirations of individual thinkers looking towards a communist society, based on community of goods, can be traced for thousands of years in human history. Still further back, the remains of communist forms can be traced in the most primitive stages of human society. But these have no direct bearing on the problems of the present day. Primitive communism was the reflection of the backward, poverty-stricken and undeveloped character of the earliest stages of human society, when there did not yet exist either the necessary development of the means of production or any consequent surplus to provide the basis for the institution of property or the division of classes. After the development of private property, the aspirations of individual thinkers for a communist society revealed the sense of the contradictions and insoluble conflicts of property society; but they could not transcend the conditions of production of their day. Plato could only base his conception of "communism" on the existing relations of production, that is, on slavery. The early Christian communism was a communism of consumption, not of production.

In contrast to these foreshadowings, modern Communism bases itself on the most highly developed technique of large-scale production, which can alone provide plenty and freedom for all, and which more and more manifestly requires, for its effective working,

communist forms of organization in place of the now obsolete private property forms which fetter its functioning. For this reason Communism in the modern sense could only come into existence after the development of capitalist large-scale production and the industrial revolution.

The advantages of communism as a higher stage of social organization are manifest.

First, the existing productive powers, which are in an increasing proportion unused, misused or blocked, can be fully utilized.

Second, the anarchy of the blind domination of the market, with its colossal waste of natural and social resources, and ever more devastating crises, is replaced by conscious harmoniously planned production and development.

Third, the expansion of production can take place freely and harmoniously to meet expanding needs, without being checked by the arbitrary market limits imposed by the class structure of society and the conditions of commodity production. In proportion as the expansion of production and development of technique is able to meet all existing needs, the outcome is no longer impoverishment, crises and wholesale unemployment, but the possibility to meet additional needs and lighten labour.

Fourth, the world organization of production, which is only possible on a communist basis, ends the conflicts of the imperialist States for possessions, raw materials and spheres of exploitation, and consequently ends the colossal waste of armaments and destructive wars which threaten to engulf humanity.

Fifth, the distinction between advanced and backward races and nations, between ruling and subject nations, disappears, and ends the present lop-sided world development, in which the majority of the world's areas, possessing all the resources for advanced

production, are held back as colonial areas of primitive technique and cheap labour. The world's resources will be used to facilitate the rapid development of these areas and their populations to the highest level equal with the most advanced countries. Through the freedom and equality of nations the path will be cleared to the single united humanity of the future.

Sixth, the abolition of classes ends the parasitism and waste inherent in the present class structure: the idleness and predatory activities above; the mis-directed labour, overwork and deprivation of development below; the increasing diversion of society's labour force to senseless competitive sales mechanisms and unproductive functions.

Seventh, the abolition of classes ends the ruinous burdens of class conflict, with the consequent social and political disturbances and diversion of energies (at present inevitable and necessary, so long as the fight has to be carried through for the social ownership of the means of production) from common constructive tasks.

Eighth, the real emancipation of women, constituting one half of humanity, at present subjected and undeveloped, becomes at last possible when women take equal part in social production, when motherhood is socially provided for, and women are no longer economically dependent on men.

Ninth, culture becomes no longer the monopoly of a class, but the common heritage of all. With the overcoming of the final remains of class distinctions, and the evolution of the new fully developed communist humanity, the antagonism between mental and manual labour, the antagonism between town and country, and the hierarchy in the existing division of labour will be finally abolished.

Tenth, in the completed communist society, with the final abolition of class distinctions, the State as an instrument of coercion for the suppression of a subject

class and the forcible overcoming of social contradictions disappears. There remains only the common tasks of co-operative administration of social production in which all freely and consciously participate. Coercion disappears from the system of human relationships. The principle of fully completed communist society is : " From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs."

All these conceptions of completed communism will appear hopelessly " visionary," " utopian " and " idealist " to the present-day commercially or administratively trained " practical man " or " man in the street," who " knows " that human nature is incapable of realizing such a social order, that greed, idleness, combativeness and lust for individual power are inherent in human nature, and that the whip of coercion and external discipline, and the threat of starvation, is essential to make the majority of humanity work and accept their lot in life.

Communists, however, are not so unpractical or unrealistic as is imagined by these very short-sighted and narrow " practical men," who see in the characteristics of a certain historical phase the supposed permanent universal characteristics of humanity. Communists understand very well that the supposed unchanging, in reality ceaselessly changing, human nature is in each period the product of the social conditions of that period ; that the capitalist social order inevitably produces extremely ugly and anti-social characteristics ; that those who are building the new social order will in the first stages inevitably carry over many habits and outlooks of the old capitalist world ; and that only the advancing construction of the new social order will carry forward a corresponding advance in the character and culture of those composing it.

For this reason the change to full communist society is not seen as taking place in a night or a year (and all

the supposed difficulties only arise from such a fantastic supposition), but is the final outcome of a long process of development. This development to communist society has to pass through a lower stage, or socialism, to the higher stage, or communism.

Socialism is the first stage of advance to complete communist society, after the working-class conquest of power and the socialization of the means of production. Under socialism the means of production are socially owned and organized ; there is no longer the division of classes between owners and propertyless workers ; there is no longer exploitation of man by man. But there still remain the " birth-marks," as Marx called them, inherited from the old capitalist relations. The productive forces of socialism are not yet sufficiently developed to assure a distribution of the products of labour according to need ; these are distributed according to the amount of labour expended. This method, although a great advance on the capitalist method, which distributes products almost inversely to the labour expended falls short of the communist formula of " according to need," and still gives special rewards to special ability or initiative, since this is in the interests of the development of the productive forces. Although classes have been abolished, there still survive traces of old types of social division (though increasingly overcome by the spread of unified all-round culture and education of all citizens), the distinction between mental and manual labour, and the separation between town and country. The organization of social labour requires in the first stages the strictest accounting, control and supervision on the part of the organized vanguard of the most advanced sections of the workers, in order to break the old habits of unco-ordinated labour, anti-social individualism and indifference to collective interests, and replace them by social habits. Under socialism the State,

coercion, and laws are still necessary, both to defeat the resistance of the old capitalist elements, and to protect social interests against the remnants of capitalist and small-property habits and outlooks until the new social habits and outlooks become general and instinctive.

Socialism is an enormous advance on capitalism. As the example of the Soviet Union has shown, it has abolished poverty, crises and unemployment, and, as soon as it reaches a world scale, abolishes war. It has abolished the division of classes, and guarantees social and cultural development to every citizen. But socialism still retains the limitations noted above, inherited from capitalism, although its further development increasingly overcomes them. Socialism is only a stage in humanity's progress to communism.

Only when the productive forces under socialism have reached such a degree of development that the resulting abundance can be distributed solely according to need, irrespective of the portion of the common social labour contributed by each individual; when the last remains of capitalism have been defeated all over the world; and when the new social habits and outlook have become universal, so that coercion is no longer necessary: only then can the State finally disappear, and socialism pass into completed communist society—the society of fully free humanity.

But for us who live in the capitalist world the next great goal is socialism. To reach socialism already requires a big struggle. It requires the wresting of the decisive means of production from their present owners, the capitalist class, in order to transform them into social means of production. This requires the ending of the power of the capitalist class, and the conquest of power by the working class. The working-class conquest of power is, therefore, the decisive task of our period—the gateway to socialism. This brings us back to the immediate issues of our period.

All the ideals and aspirations of socialism and communism, which are beautiful and dear to the hearts of millions who toil and suffer in the existing capitalist world, which have fired the imagination and inspired the courage of millions of fighters and thinkers all over the world, would be a pious dream, a dangerous opiate like the religious promises of another world, if they are not ceaselessly translated into the living realities of the present struggle, the hard and inevitably embittered struggle to end the power of capitalism and establish the power of the working class throughout the world—the supreme issue of our time on the outcome of which the whole future depends.

III—THE PROBLEM OF POWER

THE central problem of our period is the problem of power.

Many to-day see the need of a basic change in society. They see the anarchy of the existing order rolling down in blood to destruction. They agree with the aim of a rationally organized economic and social world order, in which society shall control and organize the means of production for common benefit.

But, while agreeing with the aim of communism, they are not yet ready to face the conditions of the struggle to realize that aim. They ask: Why class struggle? Why revolution and civil war? Why the dictatorship of the proletariat? Are not these methods which will defeat the aim of a co-operative social order?

In asking these questions they show they are still far from understanding that the central problem for the transformation and reconstruction of society is the problem of power. If this issue is not faced, all dreams of socialism or a new and better social order become idle, passive speculations, and even reactionary.

Communists, in their analysis of the conditions of the struggle to realize socialism, are not actuated by love of violence or of disorder or of sectional social divisions ; on the contrary, they work to overcome these, and prefer the most peaceful and orderly methods possible ; nor are they actuated by the impatience of an eager minority or the desire for arbitrary short-cuts. Their teachings on the conditions of the struggle for socialism are based on a very deeply grounded theoretical and historical understanding and experience of social development ; and the correctness of their analysis is increasingly confirmed by present-day realities.

The existing social order is based, not on abstract reason, but on the real domination of the ruling capitalist class, which maintains its power by all methods, including armed violence. This power of the capitalist class requires to be broken before it is possible to take over the means of production and organize them as social means of production. This task can only be accomplished, not by individual thinkers and philosophers, but by the power of the class opposed to the capitalist class, the organized industrial working class, once it has reached consciousness of its class aim, leading all the exploited and subject masses of the population, to replace the power of the capitalist class by its own power and build socialism.

The modern industrial working class is the leader of the socialist revolution, because the industrial working class is the only class which, created by capitalism, operating the modern means of production and trained in habits of co-operation, discipline and solidarity by the conditions of capitalism, is capable of uniting and leading all the other miscellaneous exploited strata, and is capable of defeating capitalism and building socialism. The industrial working class, in struggling for its liberation from its enslavement to the owners of the means of production, can only realize that liberation

no longer within the old framework of private property, but only by the common or social ownership of the means of production. Therefore, in achieving its liberation, the working class liberates all sections of society and finally ends the division of classes, inaugurating in its place co-operative human society.

The path of advance accordingly lies through the class struggle, which is itself the barbarous product of class-society, but is at the same time the necessary engine of advance in class-society to the final abolition of classes.

The technical intelligentsia, scientists, professionals, engineers and trained administrators, as well as doctors, teachers and others, can perform an invaluable auxiliary role in the conquest of power by the working class and in the subsequent building up of socialism. But they cannot perform, as is sometimes suggested, an independent role; they cannot aspire to independent ownership of the means of production. They can only serve either the capitalist class or the working class. The most progressive from their midst are increasingly recognizing this, and beginning to range themselves with the working class.

The advance of the working class to consciousness of its role, and to the necessary organization to realize it, is a long historical process within capitalism, carried forward by the conditions of the struggle for existence under capitalism. In this struggle the working class develops its mass organizations, the trade unions and co-operatives, and at the same time the political party of the conscious vanguard, representing the conscious aim of the overthrow of capitalism and the realization of socialism. The revolutionary political party of the working class requires to establish its leadership and strength in the decisive sections of the working class, and the working class as a whole to win the alliance of the other exploited strata (from among the peasantry,

colonial peoples and urban petty bourgeoisie) in order to win the strength and unity to defeat capitalism. This development can be traced in the history of the working-class movement, through Chartism, the Communist League, the First International, the foundation of the social democratic parties and modern trade unions, the Second International, the Communist International and developing united working-class front. This process goes forward over a series of decades passing through a chain of struggles, partial victories and defeats, to final victory. The extending conscious section of the working class, or Communist vanguard, can assist and hasten this development, and mitigate its inevitable sufferings ; but there is no short-cut to avoid this process, by which the workers learn through their own experience.

Similarly the working-class conquest of power, which began with the victory of the Russian workers in 1917, is a whole epoch of development in the period of the general crisis of decaying capitalism, embracing a series of revolutionary struggles and revolutions at different stages of development in different countries, national and colonial revolutions, civil wars, temporary victories of counter-revolution, wars of imperialist and socialist States, temporary co-existence of imperialist and socialist States, until the final victory of the world socialist revolution.

The transference of class power is the essence of revolution. The degree of struggle, violence, or civil war accompanying this is determined by historical conditions and the methods of resistance chosen by the ruling class. Experience has shown that the ruling capitalist class, like all former ruling classes, will not surrender power without violent struggle, even where the initial advance of the working class has taken place through legal forms (Finland, Hungary, Spain), and will even, before a direct threat to its power, when the

working-class movement has reached a certain degree of strength, deliberately transfer the struggle to the plane of armed violence and the destruction of legality in order to endeavour forcibly to suppress the working class movement (fascism). "Civil war is *forced upon* the labouring classes by their arch-enemies. . . . The Communist Parties, far from conjuring up civil war artificially, rather strive to shorten its duration." (*Manifesto of the First Congress of the Communist International*, 1919.)

The State power of the organized working class, leading all the previously subjected and exploited strata of the population, and constituting the new type of workers' State to suppress the resistance of capitalism and build socialism, is technically described in the term formulated by Marxism since the middle of the nineteenth century to define this transition stage between capitalism and communism as the dictatorship of the proletariat. The forms and methods of this transition stage depend on historical conditions ; and the experience of the past three quarters of a century since the formulation of the conception, and especially of the past twenty years, has thrown much light on this.

In the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, published in 1848, Marx and Engels defined the aim of "the first step in the revolution by the working class" as "to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class, to establish democracy," i.e. "the State of the proletariat organized as the ruling class." From 1850 onwards, after the experience of the 1848 revolutions, Marx regularly used the more precise definition "dictatorship of the proletariat." After the experience of the Paris Commune in 1871, which Marx declared already a first expression of the dictatorship of the proletariat, Marx noted the lesson that "the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery and wield it for its own purposes," that is, cannot "transfer the

bureaucratic and military machinery from one hand to the other," but must "break it up" in order to establish its own power.

The Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917, the German Revolution of 1918, and the Hungarian Revolution of 1919 showed the forms of realization of the working-class dictatorship through the Soviets, or Councils of Workers' Delegates, or Workers' Peasants' and Soldiers' Delegates, representing directly and with extreme sensitiveness and flexibility the broadest masses, organized and unorganized, on the basis of the factories, streets, units of the army, etc., and springing up in the conditions of revolution. The Soviets, beginning as instruments of struggle of the broadest masses, under the leadership of the working class, in a revolutionary period against the State power of the capitalist class, become, after the conquest of power, the organs of the new State power or Soviet Power, drawing in the entire masses of the population (in a way that parliamentary democracy can never do) into direct participation in public affairs, not only electoral and legislative, but also executive and administrative in every sphere, economic, social, political, military and cultural. This is the secret why Soviet Democracy, despite the sternness of its dictatorship against the remnants of the capitalist counter-revolution, is in living practice a "thousand times more democratic," as Lenin said, than even the freest parliamentary democracy under capitalism.

The experience of the Chinese Revolution has since further shown the universal character of the Soviet form, which is not a specifically Russian phenomenon, but of international significance.

The relation of the party, the class and the broad mass organs or Soviets, is the essential key to the understanding of the Bolshevik revolution, the Soviet State and the real character of the dictatorship of the

proletariat. Superficial hostile observers endeavour to describe the Bolshevik revolution as the seizure of power by a handful of revolutionary conspirators over a population of one hundred and seventy millions ; the Soviet State as the tyranny of a privileged minority under the supposed personal autocracy of a Lenin or a Stalin, or an "inverted Tsarism" ; and the dictatorship of the proletariat as a "dictatorship over the proletariat" by the Communist Party. No serious political student, who is prepared to study the facts, whatever his initial preconceptions, can for a moment accept these fantastic distortions. This was strikingly shown by the example of the Webbs, the principal leaders of the anti-communist trend in the Western European labour movement, who proceeded as administrative experts to study closely the working of the Soviet State and were compelled to admit its real popular, profoundly democratic and socialist character in their classic work *Soviet Communism*.

The party is the essential instrument of the working class for the realization of its dictatorship and for the exercise of its leadership in relation to the other elements of the working population, just as a stable, experienced and continuously developing leadership within the party is essential for its effective working. To attack these necessary forms of expression and organization of the unity, will and leading role of the working class is in reality to attack the rule of the working class, to demand the disarming and disorganization of the working class ; just as the slogan of the White Guard conspirators at Kronstadt "Soviets Without the Communist Party" was in reality a slogan for the dissolution of Soviet rule.

But the Communist Party only draws its power because it correctly expresses and represents the working class through its most active, resolute, conscious and devoted members, because it is deeply based in the

working class and in the mass organizations of the working class, and because it is deeply based, through the Soviets, in the broadest masses of the people. The Bolshevik revolution did not take place until the Bolshevik party had won the majority of the delegates in the decisive Soviets, in the Petrograd and Moscow Soviets, in the trade union representation to the Pre-Parliament, in the Northern armies, in the local election in Petrograd and Moscow etc.; that is, until the Bolsheviks really represented the decisive majority of the working class, and, through the Soviets, the majority of the population. The truth of this was demonstrated in practice by the absence of any popular resistance to the Bolshevik seizure of power, the foreign basis of support of the counter-revolutionary interventionist wars, and the invincible courage, energy, steadfastness and sacrifice of the overwhelming masses of the population to maintain their Soviet regime against the heaviest odds of united world imperialist intervention on all fronts and subsidised counter-revolution. This proof in life that the dictatorship of the proletariat represented and represents the will of the Russian people outweighs all the calumnies of journalistic pens.

The dictatorship of the proletariat, or proletarian democracy, has thus two aspects. Against the exploiters and those who support them it represents a very powerful engine of suppression—therefore a guarantee of popular liberty. For the overwhelming mass of the population it represents economic, social, political and cultural liberation from the previous class-subjection, and participation as full, active and ruling citizens in all the affairs of the State and society. From these two aspects follow the diametrically conflicting views of the dictatorship of the proletariat according to the class standpoint expressed. Hence also the similarly conflicting reports of the same facts in the Soviet Union according to the class standpoint of the observer.

To the bourgeois observer, who sees capitalism from the basis of the unrestricted freedom of the leisured rentier or in terms of the formal democratic liberties which it is in practice increasingly engaged in destroying, the dictatorship of the proletariat represents an intolerable restriction of liberty. To the class-conscious industrial worker, who knows the reality of factory slavery and class-subjection under capitalist rule, the dictatorship of the proletariat represents a vision of liberation and material realization of freedom which leaves the formal democratic liberties of even the most democratic capitalist republic a pale shadow by comparison and cover for real slavery. Between these two viewpoints no argument will bring conciliation. Only the historical process will finally prove, and is already beginning to prove that the dictatorship of the proletariat is the engine which will finally realize human freedom and save human culture, and that the alternative path leads only to the barbarism and chaos and complete slavery of fascism.

The dictatorship of the proletariat is sometimes spoken of, by those who wish to conceal its class content under a formal definition, as a "one-party system"; and critics complain that its repressive powers are exercised, not only against the exploiters, but against other "socialist" parties. This is incorrect. It is perfectly true that the unity of the working class will, in some cases even before the dictatorship, and certainly after it, tend to find expression in a united working-class party; this is natural and healthy, since the division of parties in fact represents the division of classes, and must finally disappear with the victory of the working class and socialism and the consequent abolition of classes. But in point of historical fact the dictatorship of the proletariat in Russia was for the first nine months based on two parties (reflecting the alliance of the industrial working class with the poor

peasantry) ; and in the early months there was extreme freedom of expression and agitation of the other socialist parties, so long as these represented a tendency within the working-class movement. Only when these parties united directly with the White Guard counter-revolutionaries and foreign imperialist General Staffs, they had placed themselves on the side of the exploiters, and there could no longer be any freedom for them if the freedom of the people was to be preserved.

The same applies to the allies of fascism who were dealt with in the recent trials. These were treated with the utmost tolerance and even given repeatedly renewed opportunities of positions of the highest trust and responsibility, so long as they appeared to represent only temporary divergences of viewpoint which could be rapidly cleared up in the experience of the common struggle. But so soon as they aligned themselves in treasonable alliance with the class enemy for the overthrow of Soviet power, they were dealt with—correctly and justly, as they themselves quite clearly recognized, indeed with much greater clearness than some of their would-be advocates—as enemies, and the worst enemies the working class knows, traitors. The severity of the proletarian dictatorship to class enemies is not, as is sometimes suggested, a contradiction of the freedom of the masses, but its necessary condition and safeguard.

No one should attempt to paint a revolution or dictatorship *couleur de rose*. It would be better that readers should turn away from Communism rather than that they should give it a kind of sentimental support which is not ready to face the hard realities of struggle against a barbarous and ruthless ruling class. Only before they turn away, let them be quite sure of the world to which they are turning, the world of fascism, imperialist wars and colonial slavery, whose wholesale massacres and destruction are a thousand times greater than the entire record of the proletarian revolution.

Over the past twenty years there has taken place an enormous controversy over the dictatorship of the proletariat. In the early years after the war, when the capitalist social and political fabric was shaken, and the choice of power or renunciation of power lay before the working class, the majority leaders of the labour and socialist movements in Western and Central Europe, organized in the Social Democratic Parties and post-war Second International, exerted their decisive influence to hold back the workers from the revolutionary conquest of power. They advocated instead what they termed the "evolutionary" "democratic" or "gradualist" path to socialism, that is, the policy of co-operation in capitalist reconstruction, support and strengthening of the capitalist State (including violent suppression of the widespread working-class and colonial revolt) and coalition with capitalism, as the practical method of harmonious development, through extending reforms and prosperity, to an eventual socialist goal. They declared that the dictatorship of the proletariat could not lead to socialism, but only to chaos, economic misery, civil war and the victory of counter-revolution. They declared that their policy offered the way of peaceful democratic advance to socialism without suffering or civil war.

History has settled that controversy. The experience of the two decades 1918-1938 has shown the outcome in practice of the two paths. The outcome of the path of social democracy has been, not the peaceful advance to socialism, but the victory of fascism and the destruction of the working-class organizations in the countries of Central Europe where it held decisive influence, and the extreme strengthening and menace of reaction in the remainder. In place of advancing progress and prosperity, the reality has been the extending devastation of capitalist crisis and decline and the headlong advance into war. Fifteen years too late German Social

Democracy, in its Manifesto after the accession of Hitler to power, was compelled to recognize its "great historical error" in 1918 through the failure, in the moment of opportunity, to smash once and for all the forces of capitalist reaction and the capitalist machinery of State. So far from this path having even meant escape from civil war, a stage has now been reached in which civil war is being forced upon the working class in country after country, no longer for the immediate victory of socialism, but to save the very existence of the working-class movement and to maintain even those democratic rights which were previously proclaimed as the alternative to civil war.

Only in the one country where the dictatorship of the proletariat has been established, where the leadership of Communism has been followed, only there has socialism been realized.

IV—PRESENT COMMUNIST POLICY

IN order to realize the working-class conquest of power and the building of socialism, the first task of Communism in the existing capitalist countries is to build up the organization and unity of the working class in the immediate struggle against capitalism, to develop the revolutionary consciousness of the working class and the organization of its revolutionary vanguard, the Communist Parties, to win the majority of the working class to communist policy and leadership, and to draw into association with the working class the other sections of the population whose interests lie in unity with the working class in the common struggle against monopoly capitalism.

This process requires many forms and methods of struggle, which vary according to the stage of

development and the strength and relation of the forces on each side. These varying forms and methods of struggle governed by the central strategic aim for all advanced capitalist countries at the present period, the revolutionary working-class conquest of power and the preparation for this, constitute the tactics of Communism. Critics often accuse Communists of inconsistency because they change their tactics according to the changing situation. In fact Communists would be inconsistent if they did not change their tactics when the situation changes. Marxism (or Marxism-Leninism, as it is termed to-day since Lenin carried forward the work of Marxism in the period of imperialism and the proletarian revolution), which teaches how to analyse situations dialectically on the basis of class forces so as to draw the practical conclusions, has built up a very rich experience in these tactical methods, and is the scientific guide to action for communists to carry forward their methods to meet each new concrete situation. In order to understand Communism, it is therefore essential, not only to understand the general aims and principles of Communism, but also to understand the tactics of Communism, which are of decisive practical importance.

In the revolutionary period immediately following the end of the war, when the revolutionary working-class conquest of power was immediately possible in the leading capitalist countries, Communists directed their main efforts to winning the working class directly for this aim.

As soon as the revolutionary tide began to ebb, and it became clear that the Social Democratic majority leadership of the working class was succeeding to stem the working-class revolt and serve capitalism, the necessary task became to rally and unite the working class against the consequent offensive of capitalism, to prepare for partial struggles and to build up the new Communist Parties to win the support of the majority

of the working class. These tasks were set out at the Third Congress of the Communist International in 1921, under the general slogan "To the masses!" In pursuance of this aim, the tactics of the united working-class front were put forward in a declaration of the Communist International in December, 1921, and these have since governed all communist policy. The conception of the united working-class front is that, while the majority of workers are not yet convinced of the necessity of revolutionary policy, all workers and working-class organizations, revolutionary and reformist, organized workers and unorganized workers, can unite in the immediate aims of the struggle against capitalism which are recognized as necessary by all, and in the process of the struggle the majority of the workers can advance to revolutionary understanding.

In the ensuing period many great struggles took place, the united front advanced, and the Communist Parties grew in strength. But Social Democracy still retained its hold, though weakening, on the majority of the working class, and consistently opposed the united front. In consequence capitalist reaction was able to increase its strength, and finally, when the world economic crisis produced new difficulties for capitalism and a new wave of mass awakening, to advance to the method of fascist dictatorship to maintain its power.

With the coming to power of Hitler in Germany in 1933, a new stage in the world situation opened.

Fascism's victory in Germany in 1933, and its extending offensive in Europe and throughout the world, was the direct sequel and outcome of the whole policy of Social Democracy and its disorganization of the working class in the entire period since the war, the failure to take power in 1918-21, the successive retreats and surrenders to the capitalist reaction during the decade and a half since the war, and the consequent demoralization and division of the working class.

Fascism conquered in Germany because the workers presented no united class front to resist it or rally the mass of the population against it, but were divided between the majority Social Democratic Party, which opposed unity and supported the capitalist reaction of Brüning and Hindenburg, who placed Hitler in power, and the minority Communist Party, which supported united class struggle, but could not act independently of the majority of the working class.

The offensive of fascism, towards which the most reactionary sections of monopoly capitalism in all countries increasingly advance, though in varying degrees according to the acuteness of the crisis in each country, represents the most extreme offensive of dying monopoly capitalism against the working class and the peoples of the world. Fascism aims to destroy entirely the working-class movement, to destroy entirely all liberal and democratic institutions as the soil within which the working-class movement grows up, and to lead the counter-revolutionary crusade against the Soviet Union for the destruction of Socialism.

Fascism is at the same time the main driving force of modern imperialism to a new world war for the re-division of the world. Wherever fascism has established its dictatorship, it proceeds to wars of conquest abroad : Italy in Abyssinia and Spain ; Germany in Spain, Austria and Czechoslovakia ; Japan in Manchuria and China. These preliminary wars are regarded as steps to major war aims, openly proclaimed in official fascist literature. The Triple Pact of the three leading fascist Powers, Germany, Italy, and Japan, represents the attempt to co-ordinate these war aims in a combined offensive. This extending war offensive of fascism receives practical support and assistance from the most reactionary sections of the capitalist class in the other imperialist countries, who hope to see its ultimate direction against the Soviet Union. Thus, intertwined

with the old imperialist antagonisms, develops the new type of extending counter-revolutionary world war, basically different in character from 1914.

But if fascism thus represents the most violent and dangerous offensive of dying capitalism, it expresses at the same time the weakening of the basis and stability of capitalist-class power in its last stages. It means that capitalism in extreme crisis is no longer able to place confidence in the old methods of liberal and social democratic concealment of its dictatorship to maintain its power, but is compelled itself to come out in the open as a violent, terrorist dictatorship, to take the initiative in destroying the legality which was formerly its protection and in making war on the liberal democratic and social democratic illusions which previously gave it support. From this arises a widespread disillusionment and awakening of the mass of the workers, also in the membership of the former social democratic parties, from the old reformist and legalist illusions which had previously hemmed in the struggle. On the basis of this awakening the possibility arises of healing the split in the labour movement between the revolutionary and reformist workers in the common united struggle against the new stage of capitalism's attack. This awakening extends to wide sections of the population beyond the working class, who see the destructive barbarity of capitalist reaction laid bare with its war on all democratic advance and culture. Hence arises the possibility of a still wider unity, under the leadership of the working class, against the culminating offensive of capitalist rule. The blows of the counter-revolution help to forge the army of the future victorious revolution.

The Seventh World Congress of the Communist International in 1935 responded to this situation, and gave the leadership and lines of policy to meet it which constitute the decisive practical leadership of communism in the present period.

The Seventh Congress of the Communist International, at a critical turning-point in human history, was able to speak for the most urgent and widely felt needs of the peoples of the whole world, and to show the way forward from the destruction, blood and terror that overhangs the world. The call of the Seventh Congress for the unity of all the working masses without exception, for the unity of the overwhelming majority of the population in every country against the finance-capitalist oligarchies who are preparing to drown civilization in slaughter and barbarism in order to maintain their sinking power, has become the rallying centre of humanity's advance in the present period of world history.

The pivot of communist tactics in the present situation is the aim of working-class unity—the united fighting front of all working-class parties and organizations, nationally and internationally, in the common struggle against capitalist reaction, fascism and war. Only working-class unity can stem the advance of fascism and defeat the menace of world war. Through the united action of the working-class parties the way forward is seen to the realization of a single unified working-class party, united in a single working-class International, built up through the experience of the struggle on the principles of revolutionary Marxism, and capable of leading the entire working class to the conquest of power and the constitution of socialism.

No less important is the winning into alliance with the united working class of the widest additional sections of the population in the common struggle against the common enemy, finance-capital and its reactionary rule. The mass of the peasantry, who are still the majority of the population in most European, as well as extra-European countries; the small middle-class elements in the towns; the salaried administrative and technical employees; the civil servants, doctors,

teachers and other professionals and intellectuals are all affected by the consequences of the economic crisis and political disturbances of our time, are moving from their old political orientations, view with alarm the menace of war, and are searching for the way out. Fascism seeks to take advantage of the confusions and vacillations of these elements in order to organize them, under demagogic slogans, in the service of finance-capital against the working class. But in practice fascist dictatorship deals heavy blows just against these sections, no less than against the workers ; and their true interests, as more and more come to realize, lie in unity with the working class. This unity can be realized in a broad anti-fascist People's Front for the realization of immediate economic, social and cultural demands, and for the common struggle against fascism and war. It is the responsibility of the working class to take the initiative in building up such a broad alliance, and thus isolate the ruling finance-capitalist class. Equally essential is the building up of the People's Front in the colonial countries, in the shape of a broad national anti-imperialist front, fighting in unity with the peoples of the imperialist countries against the common enemy.

The People's Front has nothing in common with the old type of electoral combination in which the labour movement was taken in tow by one or another section of the ruling capitalist class. The People's Front is a mass movement in which the united working class is the driving force and main basis, able by its strength to draw other elements with it in association. Such an alliance, passing through various forms, is essential at every stage of the struggle to the final victory of the working class ; and the maintenance of the proletarian dictatorship no less requires the correct forms of alliance with all other working and non-exploiting elements of the population.

The immediate battleground of the struggle of the working class and its allies against the ruling forces of capitalism at the present stage is the fight for democracy and peace.

Formal democracy, i.e. capitalist democracy, was in the first revolutionary years after the war the banner of the entire reaction against the working-class revolution. The democratic republic was held up as the alternative to working-class power and socialism. At that time it was necessary to expose the reactionary character of this slogan, and fight for the advance from capitalist democracy to proletarian democracy and socialism. To-day the frontier of the struggle has changed. Because the working class was not ready to establish its dictatorship and crush the capitalist reaction, the capitalist reaction now turns its attack against all democracy, even the most limited forms of democracy within capitalism. The fight therefore becomes between democracy under capitalism and fascism. Victory in this fight requires the unity of all anti-fascist democratic forces. In this issue the Communists, who are the most consistent fighters for democracy at every stage, have no hesitation in their choice. Capitalist democracy and fascism are both forms of capitalist dictatorship. But this does not mean that the difference between them is unimportant for the working class. The winning and maintenance of democratic rights within capitalism is essential to provide the most favourable conditions for the development and organisation of the working class in order to go forward to the conquest of power. Victory in the fight for democracy against fascism is the condition for the advance to proletarian democracy and socialism. Therefore the Communists fight for democracy, also the incomplete democracy within the conditions of capitalism, as against fascism. Tens of thousands of Communists, including hundreds of English Communists,

have given their lives for democracy in Spain, and will similarly fight for democracy in every country where reaction attacks it.

The Communist International was born in the fight for peace, in the struggle against the impending war of 1914-1918. The first act of the victorious Russian Revolution was the famous Peace Decree, calling the peoples of the world to the struggle for peace, and the Soviet Union has since year by year led the world fight for peace. To-day on the eve of threatening new imperialist world war, the struggle for peace takes on new intensity and significance, and develops new forms corresponding to the situation. In the first years after the war the victorious imperialist Powers instituted the machinery of the League of Nations to protect their spoils, hold the peoples in subjection and organize their combined power against the working-class revolution and the Soviet Union. To-day here, too, the frontier of the struggle has changed with the shifting balance of world forces, both within imperialism and between capitalism and socialism. Now that imperialism is heading full speed for a new world war, the League of Nations is in their way. The war-making fascist Powers leave the League; the other imperialist Powers work to weaken and sabotage it. The possibility arises for the peoples to fight to utilize the machinery and principles of the League, and the methods of the collective maintenance of peace, in order to organize the struggle against the warmakers. The Soviet Union, entering the League since 1935, leads the fight for the Peace Front to check the advance of war by a collective stand.

War is not inevitable, if the peoples unite their power to prevent it. A collective Peace Pact of Britain, France and the Soviet Union, together with the co-operation of the United States and the other democratic States, could hold in check the fascist

warmaking Powers without the necessity of war, and thus open the way to the alternative path, the victory of the peoples in the fascist countries against their dictators, and the advance of the peoples in all countries, through the working-class conquest of power, to the victory of socialism, the only final guarantee of peace.

The tactics of the Seventh Congress of the Communist International have received brilliant confirmation in the succeeding years.

In France, where fascism counted on repeating Hitler's coup in February 1934, working-class unity and the People's Front have held fascism at bay for four years. In Spain working-class unity and the People's Front have for two years withstood the armed assault, not only of their own fascists (whom alone they could have long ago beaten), but of two major invading Powers. In China national unity, through the initiative of the Communist Party, has been realized in resistance to the Japanese invader. The Franco-Soviet Pact and the Czech-Soviet Pact have constituted initial barriers which have held back major European war during these years. Five years after Hitler's coming to power, fascism is still in the preliminary stages of its offensive, and has not yet been able to reach its major war aims.

The next stage of this extending struggle, the further advance or repulse of fascism, depends on the strength, mobilization and readiness of the forces on either side. But it becomes increasingly clear that through all these preliminary and partial struggles a vast process of alignment of the peoples of the world is taking place. All over the world all sections of the peoples are becoming drawn into movement and ranged more and more into two camps, and the issue of these two camps is the issue of the future of the world. On the one side, the camp of socialism, of the Soviet Union. of the international working class, of the colonial

peoples and of all the popular anti-fascist forces, striving to save the future of humanity and of human progress. On the other side, the camp of fascism and capitalist reaction, of the barbarous leaders and war-makers of dying capitalism and their supporters in all the imperialist countries. In this way world history is preparing the conditions and mobilizing forces for the near approaching final struggle for the victory of the world socialist revolution.

The measure of advance that fascism has been able to make during these years has been mainly due to the breach in the international democratic front and in the international working-class front in Britain, where working-class unity and the People's Front is opposed by the leadership of the labour movement, and where in consequence reaction rules during all these years through the "National" Government and directly helps fascism and fascist war. If working-class unity and the People's Front could conquer in Britain, the whole balance of the world situation would be changed, against fascism and war, and in favour of democracy, peace and the advance of the working-class. If not, the outlook is one of heavy and deepening struggle for the world.

Communists face the future with seriousness and in a practical spirit before the menacing character of the present world situation. But they face the future with full confidence and the certainty of victory. If, despite all efforts to organize the struggle of the peoples in time, the imperialist ruling classes nevertheless succeed to unloose the horrors of a new world war, that war will see the downfall of their rule and the victory of the working class in a series of leading countries, preparing the way for the victory of world socialism. But so long as the least possibility exists, communists fight for the alternative path, through the unity of the peoples to check and prevent imperialist war, to

advance to the new world order with the minimum of sacrifice and suffering.

Fascism, the system and expression of a rotting social order in its final decline to the abyss, breathes pessimism for the future of humanity; its symbols are the black standard and the skull and crossbones; its songs are litanies to death and destruction.

Liberal capitalism, which seeks to present itself as a supposed alternative to either fascism or communism, is crumbling with the crumbling of the capitalism which gave it birth; its restricted area of liberty is narrowing and disappearing with the transformation of capitalism to large-scale monopoly organization and mass servitude; and, as the capitalist decline finally compels the choice between civil war or servitude to fascism, it becomes increasingly clear that only communism can create the conditions to save human liberty and all the values Liberalism once held. The old Liberalism can only see the present period as the Dark Ages; its utterances are a lament for the past and a dirge of the dying.

Communism alone, the system of the rising class and of the future world order, the principle of the advance of humanity to undreamed-of heights, breathes optimism and confidence in the future of humanity.

The optimism of Communism, and its certainty of the victory of the new communist world order, is not based on dogma, nor on mystical inspiration or belief. It is based on the rational understanding that the advance of the productive forces requires world communist organization, and the confidence, through experience of the struggle, that the strength of the world proletariat will achieve this task, the confidence, through all the experience of human history, that, in Lenin's words, "Life will assert itself."

